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Top Secret

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MEMORANDUM

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Situation in Vietnam

NSA review completed

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5 January 1967

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Information as 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: US and ARVN units ambushed a Viet Cong force 14 miles southwest of Saigon. Thirteen enemy soldiers were killed; no friendly losses were reported (Para. 1). A US Army vehicle struck a Viet Cong mine 20 miles east of Saigon late on 4 January and 23 Americans were wounded (Para. 2). Four South Korean battalions have begun Operation MAENG HO 8 in Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces (Para. 3).

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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: [redacted]

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[redacted] The chief DRV representative in Paris on 5 January offered the usual hard line comments on a wide range of questions concerning Hanoi's attitude toward peace negotiations (Paras. 2-3). Hanoi and Peking have attacked British Foreign Minister Brown's peace proposal of 31 December (Paras. 4-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A South Vietnamese Army unit, in conjunction with US forces, ambushed a Viet Cong force of undetermined size about 14 miles southwest of Saigon in Long An Province on 4 January. Thirteen Viet Cong were killed; no friendly casualties were reported. This action is part of search-and-destroy Operation LANIKAI, which began in Long An Province on 14 September 1966.

2. Twenty-three American soldiers of the US 9th Infantry Division were wounded on 4 January when their armored personnel carrier struck a Viet Cong mine about 20 miles east of Saigon in Bien Hoa Province. One suspected Viet Cong was detained. The vehicle was destroyed.

3. Four battalions of South Korean troops operating about 20 miles southwest of Qui Nhon have begun Operation MAENG HO 8. This operation encompasses parts of coastal Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces. A Viet Cong battalion with a strength of 400 men is reported to be in the area.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The likelihood that South Vietnam's forthcoming constitution may legitimize the role of political parties may jolt some of the country's existing political factions from their traditionally clandestine methods of operation.

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2. Nguyen Van Ngai, a Dai Viet and leader of the Greater People's Bloc in the Constituent Assembly, was designated by the Revolutionary Dai Viets to try to ensure that the proper safeguards were written into the constitution. During the debate in the assembly on political parties, Ngai attempted to get approval for specific guarantees, but the basic principles of political party activity that the deputies finally approved are general. One of the articles of the first chapter of the constitution submitted to the assembly by its drafting committee on 3 January would, however, seem to contain sufficient guarantees. It remains to be seen whether the present wording on political parties will be strong enough to lead the Dai Viets to declare themselves as an overt party.

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3. The Revolutionary Dai Viet Party, although factionalized, has been one of the most dynamic and well-organized political organizations and counts many influential government workers and independent politicians among its members. It is likely that it will be one of the more prominent organizations in backing candidates for the presidential and legislative elections which will probably be held later this year. The Revolutionary Dai Viets, however, are strongest in central Vietnam, a factor which will probably hamper their efforts to establish a popular base outside the Saigon area and in the southern provinces.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

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2. The latest in a series of public and private statements by representatives of North Vietnam in France concerning negotiations was made by the chief of the DRV delegation, Mai Van Bo, at a press luncheon on 5 January. Bo followed the standard Hanoi line, demanding that the US must recognize Hanoi's four points and the Liberation Front before any settlement could be achieved. Furthermore, Bo insisted that to demonstrate its good will the US must "finally and unconditionally end the bombing of North Vietnam." If this latter move were made and the US proposed to make contact with the DRV, Bo declared the US actions would "be examined and studied by the North Vietnamese Government." Bo gave no indication that North Vietnam would offer any quid pro quo for a cessation of the bombings.

3. In a question period during the luncheon, Bo denounced certain recent Western peace initiatives, terming US Ambassador Goldberg's letter to UN Secretary General U Thant, "no change...the same old song," and British Foreign Secretary Brown's initiative, a "British version of the American position." Bo also made the first comment by a North Vietnamese official on U Thant's recent peace efforts, stating that the "DRV rejects any intervention by the UN into Vietnamese affairs for the very good reason that this would be contrary to the Geneva agreements."

4. North Vietnam officially condemned British Foreign Secretary Brown's 31 December peace proposal in a sharply worded Foreign Ministry statement broadcast by Hanoi radio on 4 January. Hanoi accused the British Government of supporting and assisting the US and claimed that Brown's move was designed to cope with domestic opposition to the British Government's support of the US position in Vietnam. Additionally, the statement pointed out that the Brown proposal "completely ignored the NFLSV," thereby revealing "more clearly the malicious intention of the British Government."

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5. Peking on 5 January also condemned Brown's effort to initiate talks among the US, North Vietnamese, and South Vietnamese governments. An authoritative People's Daily Commentator article termed the British proposal a "new trick of the great peace talks conspiracy." The article linked the British proposal with the efforts of U Thant and the Soviet "revisionists" in collaborating with the US on the Vietnam question. The Chinese again expressed confidence in the ability of the Vietnamese people to resist US aggression successfully. Peking's reaction to Brown's proposal of 31 December came after denunciations by Moscow and Hanoi.

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